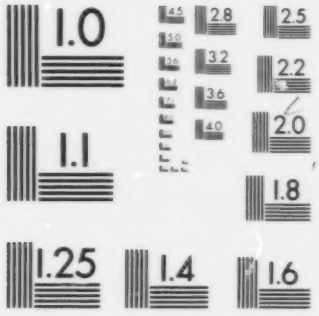
MS109

Micromedia Limited

The contents of this microfiche are copyright by the publisher of the original document. Please contact the original publisher for guidance in copyright matters.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

This statement was filmed with this document. If the pages of the document are less clear than this statement it is due to the poor photographic quality of the document.

24x

Saskatchewan
Parks and
Renewable
Resources

Hon. Colin Maxwell
Minister

Parks Branch

Blackstrap Provincial Park

Report 86 -18 b

December 1986

BLACKSTRAP PROVINCIAL PARK
PUBLIC INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Prepared for

PARKS BRANCH
SASKATCHEWAN PARKS AND RENEWABLE RESOURCES
REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN

1986

by: Hilding O. Franson, B.A., M.Sc., MCIP,
Recreation Consultant
Regina, Saskatchewan

CONTENTS

		Page
1.	SUMMARY	2
2.	BACKGROUND	
	2.1 - Previous Plans and Development	3
	2.2 - Park Classification and Purpose	4
	2.3 - Regional Context	
	2.3.1 - Location	5
	2.3.2 - Regional Perspective [Figure 1]	6
	2.3.3 - Size of Park [Figure 2]	6
3.	RESOURCE INFORMATION	
	3.1 - Historical Review	8
	3.2 - Natural Features	
	3.2.1 - Geology	9
	3.2.2 - Physiography	10
	3.2.3 - Climate	10
	3.2.4 - Soils	10
	3.2.5 - Vegetation	11
	3.2.6 - Aquatic	11
	3.2.7 - Wildlife	12
	3.3 - Recreational Features	12
	3.3.1 - Park Units [Figure 3]	13
	3.3.2 - Park Boundary Map [Figure 3]	15
	3.4 - Recreational Use	
	3.4.1 - Existing Use	16
	.1.1 - Available Facilities	19
	.1.2 - Resource Use and Trends	19
	3.4.2 - Potential Benefits and Use	
	.2.1 - Resource Protection and Interpretation	20
	.2.2 - Outdoor Recreation	20
	.2.3 - Tourism	20
4.	FUTURE REQUIREMENTS	21
	Selected References	

1. SUMMARY

Blackstrap Provincial Park was established in 1986 through the reclassification of the existing Recreation Site to the new status of a Provincial Recreation Park. The Park on the east side of Blackstrap Lake has potential for improved day-use and camping facilities for the Saskatoon market area. The man-made "mountain", created for the Canada Winter Games in 1971 is unique, offering excellent skiing in the winter months. The Provincial Park will offer a variety of quality recreational opportunities, particularly with improved facilities, programming and access.

This document summarizes previous development, resources, natural recreational features, existing and potential use, and benefits. It also suggests a number of future requirements in order to realize the Park's full potential in the Provincial Park system.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Previous Plans and Development

Prior to the creation of the reservoir there was no significant recreation use of the area. The Park Planning Branch of the Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources prepared the first planning document for the area in 1966-67. Approximately 1600 acres was deemed to be required above the full supply level on the east side of the reservoir for public recreation use. The west side of the reservoir was to be left for private cottages.

Initial planning envisaged a provincial recreation area with facilities for camping and day use. Day use activities were to include family and group picnicking, swimming and beach facilities, boating and fishing, sports area and childrens' playgrounds, viewpoints, interpretive displays and necessary access roads. Minimum irrigation, pump-out toilets, gravelled parking, modest buildings and minimal services were anticipated. Tree planting would be limited to tree belts only. The standard of facilities and future development would be justified by acceptance, use and future demands by visitors.

For planning purposes comparisons were made with the attractiveness and use of Pike Lake, twenty miles southwest of Saskatoon, the major market area. It was assumed that Blackstrap reservoir would be at least as attractive as Pike Lake. It was larger, wider and deeper, and the water quality was expected to be as good. Access by way of the 4 lane divided Highway #11 was considered good despite being 30 miles from Saskatoon. Tourist traffic was expected to increase on Highway 11 and Saskatoon (population 113,074 in 1966) was expected to continue to grow rapidly associated with continued urbanization and the potash industry developments. Park facilities and services would be at least equal to those at Pike Lake and not be a limiting factor to visitation. Because camping was accepted to be much less attractive than at Pike Lake, demands were expected to remain low.

In addition to the day-use and camping facilities in the Recreation Site, the Department of Natural Resources was to be responsible for continuous operation of the ski facility following completion of the 1971 Winter Games. In some instances budget limitations were responsible for reductions in development which subsequently affected the long term capability of the area to serve the needs of recreational skiing. Major problems which had to be overcome after the Games included: overcrowding of lift lines and the daylodge; the upper part of the mountain was too steep for the majority of recreational skiers; snowmaking equipment was inadequate; and icing of the slopes due to lack of wind protection.

A consultant Winter Recreation Study in 1972 evaluated Blackstrap Mountain and recommended a number of short and long term

improvements. Over the past ten years the majority of these improvements have been made, including improvements to the day lodge, improved snow grooming and snowmaking equipment, additional lift capacity (triple chair lift) and recontouring and expansion of downhill slopes.

2.2 Park Classification and Purpose

Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources presented a White Paper on the Parks Act in 1984. A network of 17 Provincial Parks and over three hundred Recreation Sites, Regional Parks and Protected Areas had been established since the 1930's. It was anticipated that the existing system of park lands could become better known, appreciated and used.

It was also clear that the establishment of additional Provincial Parks was needed to fully represent the natural and cultural diversity of the province and to provide a greater range of recreational opportunities in all seasons of the year to all residents and visitors.

One of the major provisions of the Parks Act was to identify a classification of Provincial Parks for the purpose of creating a greater public awareness of the primary purpose of individual parks and therefore a more appropriate understanding and use of the area: and a more clear and comprehensive approach to park planning, development and use.

Four classes of Provincial Parks are now identified: Wilderness Parks; Natural Environment Parks; Recreation Parks and Historic Parks. Provincial parks are usually large areas of land and water where the high quality of the natural resources combine to make the area provincially significant. The Parks are dedicated to the people of Saskatchewan and visitors to the province for their enjoyment and the cultural, educational and social benefits that may be derived from them for existing and future generations. All parks are established to achieve the dual purpose of recreational use and resource protection, while contributing to the provincial economy through tourism.

As a Recreation Park, Blackstrap will be developed and used in a manner distinctly different from the other three classes of provincial parks. Typically, the purpose of all Recreation Parks is to provide a variety of high quality recreational opportunities and facilities primarily within close proximity of major population concentrations.

The primary purpose of the Blackstrap Provincial Park will be to provide high quality year-round recreational opportunities in the Saskatoon region. The focus will be on development of facilities to support a wide range of intensive recreational activities in an attractive natural setting. Unlike a

recreation site, which is typically a small area focused on a particular activity or facility like a beach, Blackstrap Provincial Park will utilize most of its area and variety of resources to encourage the widest possible segment of the public to come to the Park and to experience and enjoy the out-of-doors.

Blackstrap will complement the Provincial Park system by providing a downhill skiing facility in the Saskatoon region in addition to other recreational opportunities. The man-made mountain is the only one of its kind in the province.

2.3 Regional Context

2.3.1 Location

Blackstrap Provincial Park is located in Township 32, Range 4, West of the 3rd Meridian, along the south-east shore of Blackstrap Lake some 40 km (25 miles) south of Saskatoon. The area is situated east of Highway #11, the main traffic route between Regina and Saskatoon, and can be reached by paved Highway 211 which joins Highway #11 at Dundurn. Access to the east side of the lake is by a causeway near the middle of the lake. The recreation facilities are situated linearly along the internal park road with day use picnicking, parking and services furthest north. The campground is located furthest south, visible from Highway #11 on the opposite (west) side of the lake. The man-made mountain is the most prominent feature visible for miles due to its 150 foot elevation above the prairie landscape.

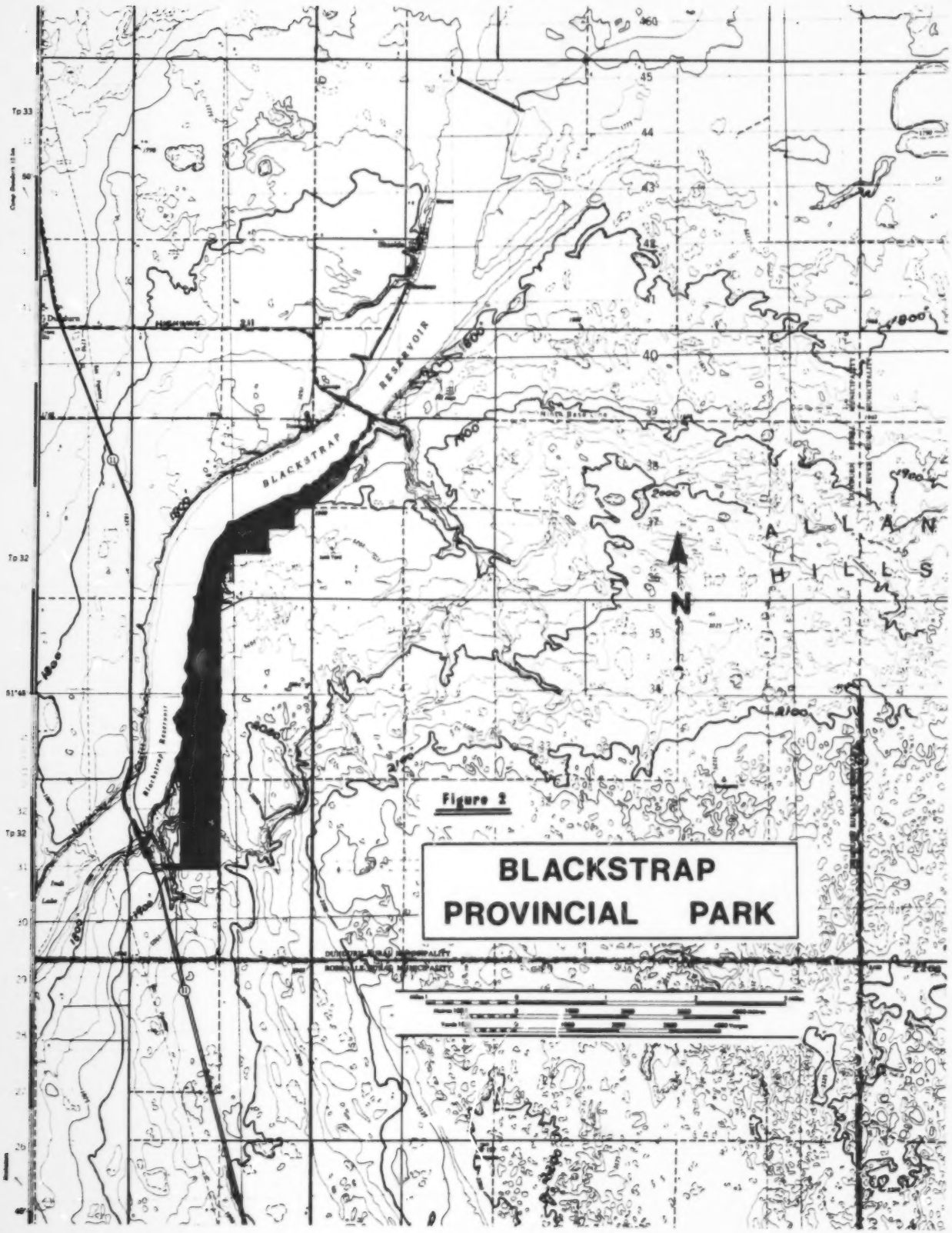
Access to the Provincial Park is possible from the south in the summer season. A farm access road which forms part of the eastern boundary (sections 14 and 23) connects to Highway #11 two miles south and one-half mile west of the south-east corner of the Park. At this location there is no visual evidence of the lake, the valley, or any recreational facilities other than the "back side" of the mountain.

2.3.2 Regional Perspective [Figure 1]

2.3.3 Size of Park

The Provincial Park includes all the area previously designated as the Recreation Site. The Park is approximately 1300 acres (526 ha) in size extending from the south boundary of section 11, Township 37, Range 4, West of the 3rd Meridian to the causeway in the NW quarter of Section 31, Township 32, Range 3, West of the 3rd Meridian. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the size and shape of the Park as well as the Park boundaries.

Figure 2: Size of Park



3. RESOURCE INFORMATION

3.1 Historical Review

In July 1960, recreation consultant W.M. Baker was commissioned by the South Saskatchewan River Development Commission to undertake a survey of the recreation potential of the proposed Blackstrap Reservoir. The Saskatoon South-east water supply system was being planned to supply water from Lake Diefenbaker to areas north and east for irrigation, industrial development, and municipal purposes.

Baker concluded that Blackstrap Reservoir would have very good recreation potential if the full supply levels could be maintained at elevations of 1750' or higher, creating a lake of approximately 2700 acres, nearly 8 miles long, east of Highway 11. Boating, fishing, cottaging, camping and picnicking would be the most sought activities.

Vegetation cover (trees) was primarily limited to scattered coulees on the east side of the reservoir. Most of it was not considered attractive for outdoor recreation. Baker identified four potential development areas requiring further study if the reservoir were eventually created for other than recreation purposes.

By early 1966 the Saskatchewan Water Supply Board had made a definite proposal to create Blackstrap Reservoir as one link of a chain of reservoirs and canals to supply water for agriculture and industry (potash) south east of Saskatoon. Construction was undertaken in 1966 and 1967 with the reservoir filled in 1968. The new reservoir was nearly 9 miles long and one-half mile wide at a full supply level of 1753.5 feet above sea level.

The Blackstrap Recreation Site was officially established in 1968 on the east side of the reservoir.

When the Canada Winter Games were awarded to Saskatoon for February, 1971 a site was required for a ski area capable of hosting downhill races, ski-jumping and cross-country skiing.

In order to host the Games, the City of Saskatoon proposed to build a "mountain" of sufficient vertical height. Many sites in the surrounding area were investigated as to soil suitability and stability for this type of earthwork but no acceptable site could be located along the North or South Saskatchewan River banks. The only suitable area found was within the area under development by the Department of Natural Resources at Blackstrap Reservoir. Land which had been previously zoned for summer day use activities was rezoned for winter use and additional land was purchased for the "mountain". Construction began in 1969 and was completed in the summer of 1970.

3.2 Natural Features

3.2.1 Geology

During the Cretaceous period of geologic history the entire Saskatoon region was covered by shallow seas into which rivers from the west emptied, forming deltas. During the Tertiary Period (64 to 3 million years ago) the region received non-marine sands, gravels, silts and clay from the rapidly rising Cordilleran Mountains.

As the continental glaciers advanced southwestward through the region, they eroded the bedrock Cretaceous and Tertiary deposits and diverted drainage from northeast to southeast. In addition to glacial erosion, up to 800 feet of glacial sediments were deposited in the Saskatoon region during at least five episodes of glaciation. The last glacier retreated across the Saskatoon region between 14,000 and 12,000 years ago.

Since the cessation of glacial influence alluvium has been deposited in the North and South Saskatchewan River Valleys. On the draining of Lake Saskatchewan, deltaic sands have been reworked into parabolic dunes, which have now been mostly stabilized by vegetation. The sand dune area west of Dundurn is one of the largest in the province.

Blackstrap Lake owes its origin to the last deglaciation processes. According to geologist E.A. Christiansen (1979) meltwater drained from Lake Saskatchewan northeast through the Blackstrap Coulee, the lake north of the Allan Hills, the Lewis Spillway, Glacial Last Mountain Lake and then through the Last Mountain, Qu'Appelle and Assiniboine Spillways into Glacial Lake Agassiz in Manitoba.

During this phase of retreat, a lobe of the glacial ice occupied the broad lowland between the Allan Hills and the upland in the western part of the Region. Lake Saskatchewan was lying along the ice margin to the west and north of the Blackstrap Coulee.

A subsequent readvance of the glacier closed the drainage through the Blackstrap Coulee, raising the level of Lake Saskatchewan to such an extent that it again overflowed southward into the South Saskatchewan and Qu'Appelle Spillways. With the final retreat of the glacier from the region, Blackstrap Coulee was left as a significant topographic feature. The flow of meltwater through the spillway formed a relatively smooth but steep sided valley with limited terracing. Wind and water erosion and deposition have further tended to smooth these surficial features over the past 12,500 years.

3.2.2 Physiography

Today the Blackstrap spillway is situated at the eastern edge of the Saskatchewan Rivers Plain Natural Region, immediately west of the topographically high Allan-Minichinas Upland Natural Region. The Allan-Minichinas Uplands are a rolling morainic till plain ranging from 1800 to 2200 feet in elevation, having over 600 feet of glacial deposits above the bedrock surface.

Blackstrap Lake, at an elevation of 1,753 feet, lies 50 to 100 feet below the upland to the west, but considerably lower relative to the Allan Hills on the east. The lake is confined within the glacial spillway by dams at both its north and south ends.

Highway 11 passes through the bottom of the Blackstrap Coulee immediately southwest of the southern dam. Indi Lake, a shallow local drainage basin, lies in the bottom of the valley further southwest. Due to the drainage off the higher Allan Hills to the east, a number of small coulees and ravines eroded into the till plains along the eastern side of the former spillway. The majority of these ravines within the Park area extend less than one half a mile from the lake. Their sheltered aspect has permitted parkland vegetation to become established on the north facing slopes. All of these ravines are relatively steep sided and youthful in appearance.

3.2.3 Climate

The climate of the area can be described as continental semi-arid to subhumid. It is characterized by warm summers with wide variations in day and night time temperatures, long cold winters and moderately-low precipitation. The average annual precipitation is 14.5 inches (36 cm) with the majority occurring during the growing season. The average frost free period is 105 days, from late May to early September.

The mean daily temperature in July is 18.9 degrees C (66 degrees F). Mean daily temperatures in January are -16.4 degrees C (2.4 degrees F) and winds average 17 km/h prevailing from the North northwest and southwest. Mean daily minimum temperatures in Saskatoon in January are -21 degrees C (-6.4 degrees F) but mean January wind chills are as low as -32 degrees C. Snowfall in the Dundurn-Blackstrap area averages 105 cm. (42.1") being measurable on an average of only 33 days per year. Snowmaking is essential to the successful operation of the ski facility due to the lack of natural snowfall.

3.2.4 Soils

Soils within the Park reflect their parent materials (surficial deposits) and range from moderately fine textured alluvial and colluvial deposits along the shoreline and the

adjacent relatively flat alluvial plains, to the well-drained dark brown Chernozemic soils on the upland. The upland soils are of the Weyburn soil association, medium to moderately fine textured, moderately calcareous, and moderately stony. They are well drained and of a loam or sandy loam texture.

The valley side slopes are of the Hillwash Association. They are dominantly chernozemic soils of variable textured colluvial and eroded deposits.

3.2.5 Vegetation

Natural vegetation consists of mixed grass prairie species with aspen parkland vegetation spreading out from the more sheltered tributary coulees and ravines. Tree species are primarily aspen poplar but a variety of low brush type species exist (rose, alder, chokecherry, saskatoon, dogwood, hawthorn).

Various other species have been planted in strip plantations in areas considered for future recreation use. Wind protection, shelter and aesthetics were of prime consideration as well as enhancement of the sparse natural vegetation within the Park. Planted tree species include: hybrid poplar, green ash, and siberian elm.

3.2.6 Aquatic

Upon completion of the Gardiner Dam in 1967, the Saskatchewan Water Supply Board constructed the Saskatoon-Southeast Water Supply Project, diverting water from Lake Diefenbaker to serve municipal, agricultural, industrial and recreational needs in the area south and east of Saskatoon. The Blackstrap reservoir was the largest of six reservoirs, having a surface area of nearly 3000 acres (1215 ha) and a maximum depth of 9 meters.

By 1970 it was found that conditions in Blackstrap reservoir would be favourable for establishing or maintaining fish populations. Twelve species of fish were found in the water supply system, all native to the Saskatchewan River system. They had been transferred to the reservoir network by pumping operations into the canal on the east side of the Gardiner Dam.

The Saskatchewan Water Supply Board allowed fish management to proceed in Blackstrap reservoir only. Annual water drawdown for irrigation in the smaller reservoirs was considered to be too severe to permit successful fish management.

Blackstrap is stocked regularly with walleye. A 1984 fisheries survey found an excellent population of walleye and a fair population of northern pike and whitefish. Several large whitefish were recorded in an earlier survey. The canals of the water supply network are chemically treated annually for control of aquatic weeds and algae. A fisheries management plan could assist

the sport fishing in the future. The game species now present include walleye, northern pike, whitefish and goldeye. Angling success has declined in recent years.

The water quality of Blackstrap Lake is conducive to water-based activities including swimming, boating, sailing and water skiing. Growth of algae has been evident in late weeks of the summer recreation season but aquatic activities are generally not curtailed. Draw down of the lake for downstream irrigation and other water needs has reduced lake levels to such an extent that existing boat launches are often too high to use.

3.2.7 Wildlife

The Provincial Park with its natural vegetation of grasslands and wooded coulees, provides good habitat for wildlife in the region. Most of the upland east of the Park is cultivated, making the Park a good refuge for wildlife.

Wildlife species characteristic of the area include cotton tail rabbit, jack rabbit, ground squirrel, porcupine, striped skunk, raccoon, coyote, sharp-tailed grouse and white tailed deer. A variety of shore and water birds are also evident and the reservoir serves some migrating species. The lake is used as a staging area for ducks and geese in fall and provides good opportunities for viewing such waterfowl. Opportunities also exist in the spring to view migrating song birds along the wooded valley slopes.

3.3 Recreational Features

Blackstrap Provincial Park's primary features are both man-made; the "mountain" ski hill and the reservoir in the old glacial spillway. The mountain is unique to the province and the closest ski facility to the Saskatoon market. With continued improvement to the sking facilities since construction, Blackstrap Mountain has attained a very good reputation.

As a summer, day-use and camping area, Blackstrap has considerable undeveloped potential for more use. The lake is attractive for boating, but sport fishing has not reached original expectations.

The linear nature of the Park, four miles north-south and generally one quarter to one half mile wide along the east side of the lake, restricts development in any one zone or area. Much of the area within the Park is steep grassed hillsides or ravines with dense brush and tree cover. These steep slopes provide an attractive natural setting for recreational activities. Sites most suitable for intensive day-use activities are generally restricted to a narrow strip of land between the shoreline and the toe of the valley walls.

In the northern half of the Park this narrow strip of gently sloping land has been utilized effectively for access roads, parking, games areas, picnic grounds, playgrounds, grassed areas behind the bathing beach and necessary service buildings. In the southern half of the Park the internal road joins a north-south municipal road on the upland, providing access to the campground area. The developed camp sites are one hundred and fifty feet, vertically, and up to fifteen hundred feet, horizontally, from the lake. Despite the upland tree belt plantations, there would appear to be a number of more attractive potential campground locations closer to the lake. One potential area, though small, is near the north end of the Park along the existing entrance road, near the day use zone. A second area would be immediately west of the existing campground, down beside the lake, accessed from an existing road extended along the lake. Shoreline and beach improvements could be made in this area as well.

3.3.1 Park Units [Figure 3]

A park area may be subdivided into 'units' to describe zones of use and/or natural potential. Within larger parks where resources may vary considerably or where intensity of use or development may vary, designation of specific zones may be quite apparent to park visitors. In smaller parks, where resources are more uniformly distributed, park units become more associated with areas of development.

At Blackstrap Provincial Park, in winter, there is only one significant activity zone--the 'mountain' and immediate vicinity where all support facilities are located (lodge, lifts, parking). The remainder of the area remains mainly unused except for cross-country skiing along designated trails and in some of the more sheltered areas of the valley hillsides.

In the summer season again there are basically only two natural units: the gently sloping lowlands between the lake and the toe of the valley walls, and the steeper valley sides themselves. There is virtually no level upland within the Park as the 'mountain' was constructed upon the largest piece of upland adjacent to the valley.

From a "use" or development viewpoint the linear park may be considered to have two units in the summer season: the day-use area in the northern half and the camping area in the southern half.

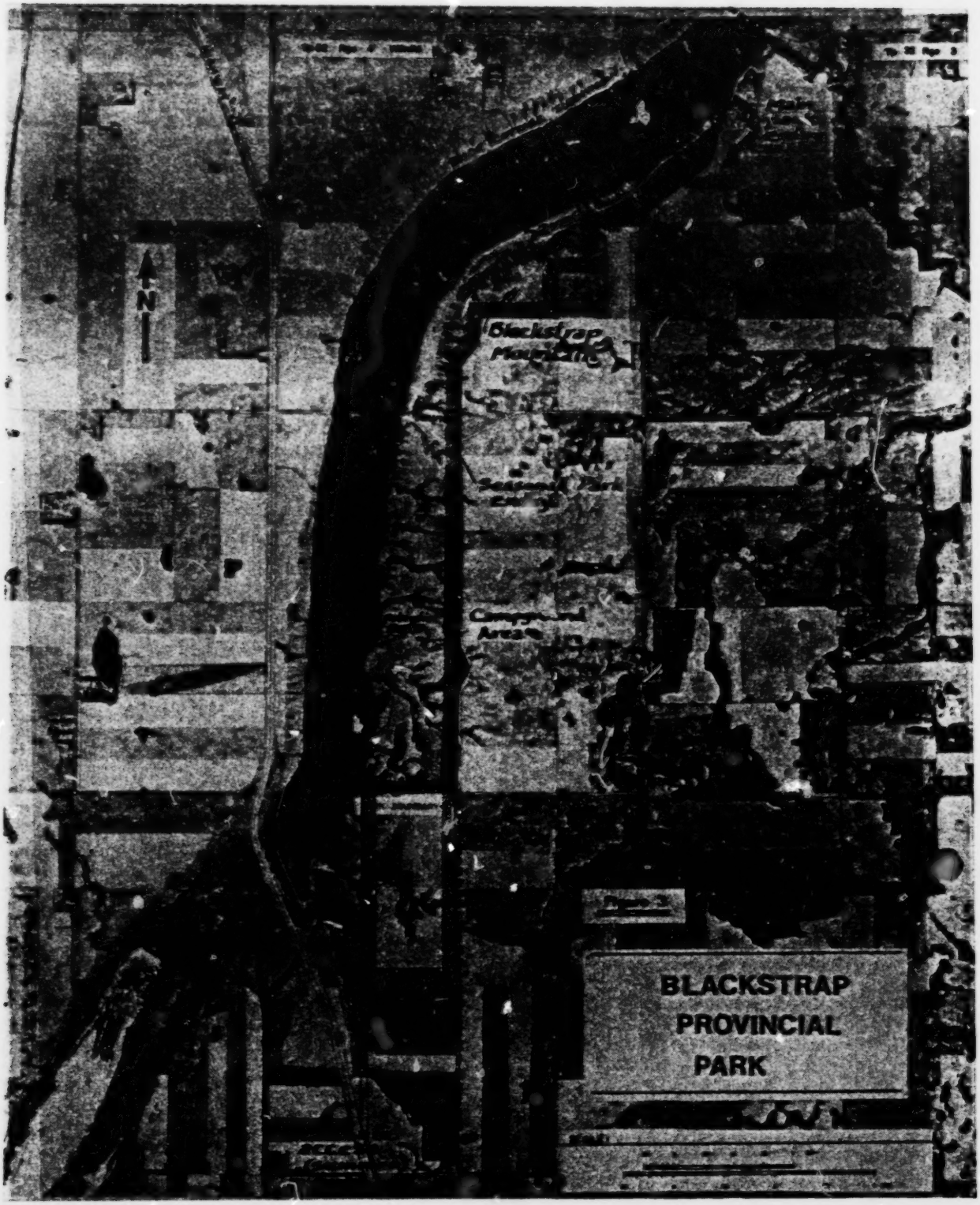
Originally it was proposed that the day use zone would be accessed from the north, via the causeway and the camping zone would be entered from the south, directly from Highway 11 behind the dam in the valley. Before the creation of the 'mountain' in the north west quarter of section 25, distinct zones were planned for the campground area in the south (880 acres) and the day-use

area (375 acres) along the lakeshore in section 36, Range 4 and section 31, Range 3, where the most attractive natural tree cover existed. A maintenance area, a small commercial area, beach development, boat launch, shelters, sportgrounds and parking were also planned in the 'core' area.

Access to the existing campground and the south end of the Park is restricted to the municipal road on the upland east of sections 14 and 23. The campground is operated as a self-registration facility, with access from this upper road which links to Highway 11 on the upland two miles south of the Park boundary.

Consideration should be given to establishing improved access from Highway #11 into the south end of the Park.

3.3.2 Park Boundary Map [Figure 3]



3.4 Recreational Use

3.4.1 Existing Use

Use of the Provincial Park occurs during both summer and winter months. Traditional day-use activities associated with the lake include picnicking, camping, swimming, and boating. Downhill skiing on the 'mountain' is the primary use of the area in winter, although cross-country skiing, tobogganing and motor tobogganing are evident. Cottaging is the major use of the western side of the lake, outside the Park area (Thode Subdivision and Shields Subdivision).

Although fluctuating annually, overall use of Blackstrap facilities has increased over the past number of years. The following tables illustrate the number of vehicles entering in summer, and the number of skiers and skiing permits issued in winter.

Table 1 Number of Vehicles Entering in Summer Months

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Vehicles Entering	10,526	18,542*	17,891	19,032	15,345	14,569
Daily Entry Permits	4,530	5,615	4,874	7,869	5,770	3,994

*partially estimated

Table 2 Number of Skiers and Skiing Permits Issued

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Number of Skiers	8,936	10,719	12,540	17,577	15,583	19,057
Skiing Days	37	54	65	70	62	58
Daily Permit	8,482	10,353	12,179	16,278	14,221	17,779
Seasonal Permits	452	366	361	1,299	1,362	1,278

The 'number of skiers' at Blackstrap (Table 2) represents the total number of daily and seasonal permits issued. Between 1980 and 1985 the number of daily permits increased from 8,482 to 17,779, an increase of 109 percent. A Triple chairlift was installed for the 1985 ski season. This resulted in a significant increase in use as indicated in Table 2. During this same five year period seasonal permits increased from 452 to 1,278, an

increase of over 200 percent. In 1980 only five percent of the permits issued were seasonal. In 1984, 8.7 percent of permits were seasonal. This suggests that more people are willing to risk the purchase of a season ticket, reflecting a greater satisfaction in the area.
If season permit holders used the area an average of six times per winter, actual use figures for the 1980-1985 period would be as follows:

1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
11,194	12,549	14,345	24,072	22,393	25,447

This suggests a doubling of skiing activity in the past five year period. Continued growth in this activity is expected following the improvements made in 1985.

Use of the Blackstrap Recreation Site did not increase at the rates originally anticipated due to a number of factors. When the area was first established and plans were made for accommodating day-use, primarily from Saskatoon, comparisons were made with Pike Lake Provincial Park. It was estimated that use and increasing visitation would be comparable to Pike Lake if the level of facilities and services was not a limiting factor. This has not been the case, however.

Over the past number of years, as a Provincial Park, Pike Lake continued to be developed at a faster rate than the Blackstrap Recreation Site. In addition to the services and facilities found at Blackstrap, Pike Lake offered tennis courts, a recreation hall, aquatics and other recreation programs, interpretive programs, public education and small craft programs, a visitor center, boat rentals, 90 electrified campsites (plus 97 unelectrified), a campground service center and laundry, fast food services, golf course, mini golf course, and nature trails. The close proximity and accessibility of many of these services from the cottage subdivisions and campgrounds also added to their attractiveness at Pike Lake.

While Blackstrap's recreation use has not kept pace with the older and better developed Pike Lake Provincial Park, summer vehicle entries have generally increased relative to Pike Lake visitation. In 1979 and 1980 summer vehicle entries to Blackstrap were approximately 27% of those at Pike Lake. By 1983 and 1984 entries to Blackstrap had increased to nearly 50 percent of those at Pike Lake.

"Senior" (free entry for any vehicle with a senior citizen), entry permits to Blackstrap are also increasing in numbers (538 in 1980, 786 in 1982 and 916 in 1984), and as a percentage of the total number of permits issued.

Campground use at Blackstrap Lake has been particularly disappointing; peaking at 2,514 camper-days in 1980. The average length of stay has been 1.1 days for the average camping group of 3.4 persons. This suggests that Blackstrap is used as an overnight stop rather than a destination.

Table 3 illustrates the total number of camper-days at Blackstrap Lake between 1977 and 1985.

Table 3 Total Camper-Days at Blackstrap Recreation Site. (1977 - 1985)

Year	'77	'78	'79	'80	'81	'82	'83	'84	'85
Total Camper Days	2,262	2,262	2,367	2,514	1,470	2,067	1,700	1,561	1,310

For the 60 unserviced campsites, occupancy peaked at only 11 percent in 1984 in the month of July. Average occupancy in June and August was only 5 and 7 percent respectively, mainly on weekends and holidays.

A comparison of the type of camping equipment used at Pike Lake and Blackstrap indicates that Pike Lake is much more attractive for tent trailers and cabin trailers as nearly 60% of units are of these two types. This is only slightly above the provincial park average of 57 percent. Only 24.5 percent of campers at Pike Lake use truck campers or motor homes, near the provincial average. Blackstrap, on the other hand has only 24.5 percent of its units in the tent trailer and cabin trailer categories while the majority of its units (53.6%) are motor homes and truck campers. Truck campers are most often used in northern parks and recreation sites where access roads and more limited facilities warrant.

The majority of campers at Blackstrap now use motor homes (42.4%) or truck campers (11.2%) rather than pull a trailer of any type. Blackstrap is unique in this regard, possibly reflecting the lack of services and attractiveness of the camping areas for other than self-contained camping units.

While more visitors are purchasing entry and seasonal permits to use Blackstrap, fewer and fewer seem to be enjoying the camping experience. As a new Provincial Park, Blackstrap's campgrounds can be improved to encourage more campers to come and stay longer.

3.4.1.1 Available Facilities

Existing facilities in the Park include the following:

- boat launches (4) and docking facilities (3),
- 150 meter swimming beach with bath/change facilities
- sixty unserviced campsites and a group camping area
- playgrounds and ball diamonds
- fish cleaning tables
- picnic grounds/day-use areas. (225 tables,195 barbecues)
- 5 km. cross-country ski trails
- administration office, park entry office and maintenance compound
- two summer and two winter private commercial leases (food services, rental equipment)
- major downhill ski facility, including lifts, day lodge, snow making, snow grooming, equipment rentals and parking areas.

3.4.1.2 Resource Use and Trends

Recreational use of the lake for aquatic purposes has been limited more by the level of on-shore facility development and programming than by the resource base itself. Due to the absence of high quality natural sand beaches which could be the focus of day-use core areas, beach and backshore improvements must be man-made. Activity areas require suitable access and support facilities whether they be for picnicking, camping, outdoor games, swimming, or interpretation of the natural resource base. Increased use of the lake for boating and sport fishing also require improvements such as longer boat launches, docks and parking, and in the case of fishing, fish stocking and improved management.

Low and declining use of the area for camping not only requires facilities and services such as electricity, modern washrooms, showers and laundry, but the camping area itself needs to be attractive and sheltered from the hot sun and prevalent winds. Accessibility to other day-use activity areas is also desirable to increase use of the recreational resources by campers.

Use of the Park resources has been limited to the more accessible lower lands and treed areas adjacent to the main access route from the north. The boat launch sites and southern campground are the exceptions. For the most part, the valley sides and particularly the resources of the southern half of the entire Park area have been used very little, in summer or in winter.

The valley hillside and sheltered ravines in the northern portion of the Park, especially near the 'mountain', have been used more extensively for hiking and cross-country skiing in winter. The man-made mountain itself receives optimum use now that the initial problems of icy slopes and limited uphill lift capacity

have been overcome. Trends towards increasing skier-days and more season passes by skiers support this view.

3.4.2 Potential Benefits and Use

3.4.2.1 Resource Protection and Interpretation

The major natural resource to be protected is the lake itself and the fisheries resource. A number of recreational activities directly depend upon the attractiveness of the lake resources (boating, fishing, swimming/bathing) and a number of others indirectly benefit (camping, cottaging, picnicking). A fisheries management plan and fish stocking program would protect that resource while an overall park management strategy would identify and guide land and water use to achieve optimum use of the available resources.

Interpretive nature trails, suitable viewpoint displays and other interpretive facilities could interpret the geologic history and physical environment of Blackstrap Lake. It could also explain the Saskatoon southeast water supply system which was developed for a variety of uses, including recreation.

3.4.2.2 Outdoor Recreation

Designation as a Provincial Recreation Park will bring about improved facilities, programming and promotion. There will be continued outdoor recreation benefits to the Saskatoon region, particularly for camping and those day-use activities already identified. Improved access and continued development of facilities and resources would benefit users in summer and winter.

3.4.2.3 Tourism

Blackstrap is gaining in popularity for winter recreation beyond the immediate Saskatoon market area. As a tourist attraction the "mountain" will continue to be of interest but the developed resources will not constitute a major tourist attraction or destination area in the region. In summer, tourists may visit the Park for a short time while passing through the area, especially if access was improved and promoted from the south end of the Park via Highway #11, but the primary role of the Park will be as a day use area for the Saskatoon market.

4. FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

A number of improvements are warranted at Blackstrap Recreation Park. Reclassification from a Recreation Site to a Provincial Park will improve its status relative to other competing day-use areas in the Saskatoon region, particularly Pike Lake Provincial Park.

A park management strategy, a fisheries management strategy and additional fish stocking are required. Improved day-use facilities may include development of a second beach area further south, more recreation programs and attractions, additional landscaping and tree planting. Electrification and upgrading or relocation of the campground services are necessary.

Reconstruction of Highway #211 from Highway #11 to the Park is required. Paving and improved signing of the south access route should be considered. Improved promotion of the Park will be associated with the new Provincial Park status.

The ski facilities have recently undergone major improvements including the installation of a triple chair lift and expansion of the downhill slope capacity. Snowmaking and grooming equipment has also been upgraded. Other than expansion or replacement of the existing day lodge, additional improvements at the ski area are not anticipated in the foreseeable future. Summer use and the visual appearance of the ski area should be addressed.

The majority of immediate improvements required at Blackstrap are of a 'public' nature, offering little opportunity for further private development. With improved facilities, programming, access and ultimately greater visitation and use of the resources, additional private opportunities may result in the service industry sector (food concessions, store, rentals, etc.).

Selected References

- Baker, W.M., Recreation Consultant, South Saskatchewan River Development Commission, "A Reconnaissance Survey of the Recreation Potential of the Blackstrap and Delisle Reservoirs", July, 1960.

- Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources, Park Planning Branch, "Recreation Planning Document: Blackstrap Reservoir of the Saskatoon--Southeast Water Supply", February, 1967.

- Genereux, R.J., and Associates Ltd, for Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources, "Road Access and Park Usage at Proposed Blackstrap Reservoir Park", June, 1967.

- Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources, Park Planning Branch, "Recreation Planning Proposals, Blackstrap Reservoir", March, 1968.

- Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources, Park Planning Branch: "Potential Demand and Facilities for Blackstrap Reservoir: A New Recreation Area", March, 1968.

- Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources, Park Planning Branch, "General Development Plan, Blackstrap Reservoir", April, 1968.

- Epec Consulting Ltd, for Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Branch, "Saskatchewan Winter Recreation Study", by H.O. Franson and D.C. McLaughlin, July, 1972.

- Saskatchewan Department of Renewable Resources; (W.M. Beard, Development Co-ordinator, Saskatoon Region), "Blackstrap Ski Area Visitation Analysis and Development Proposals", December, 1974.

- Christiansen, E.A., for Saskatchewan Municipal Affairs, "Geology of the Saskatoon Region, Saskatchewan", March, 1979.

- Christiansen, E.A., Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences, "The Wisconsinan deglaciation of southern Saskatchewan and adjacent areas", Volume H, Number 4, 1979.

- Head, W.K., Saskatchewan Institute of Pedology Publication M47, "Soil Resources of the Saskatoon Region", for Saskatchewan Municipal Affairs, 1979.

- Mollard, J.D. and Associates Ltd., for Saskatchewan Water Resources Commission, Regina, "Blackstrap Reservoir Shoreline Study", March, 1980.

- Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources, "White Paper: The Parks Act", 1984.

- Parks: Research and Planning Consultants, Victoria, B.C., for Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources, "Provincial Park Classification System", March, 1985.

- Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources, Regina, "Visitation and Outdoor Recreation Statistical Reports", Various Years.